First Impressions by PuffyPhantom

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Summary:

Danny wasn't sure what to expect when he is forced to tag along for his parent's college reunion, but he wasn't anticipating meeting someone that would make a lasting impression on him.

Notes:

Such a fun episode to write stuff about. Maybe I'll add more to this since it feels kind of short. Not sure.

Thanks for reading.

Work Text:

Danny tossed and turned as he struggled to get comfortable in his makeshift bed. After he had enough of wriggling around, he settled on his side with his back facing Jazz and the rest of his family. Covering his ears with his pillow did nothing to muffle his dad's loud snoring, and he just about accepted that a good night's rest was completely out of the question.

He let out a sigh through his nose, staring through the darkness and into the wall of the Fenton RV. He was still on edge about the ghost vultures that had attempted to hunt down his dad, and being inside a vehicle that carried heavy anti-ghost artillery didn't exactly quell his nerves either. But there was no point in complaining about the trip anymore. Now, Danny was hoping that the place they'd be staying at would help provide even a smidge of comfort. And judging by the fact that the guy they'd been invited by had some deep pockets, Danny did foresee a comfortable bed in his future, at the very least.

It was a little crazy to think that someone who his dad used to go to college with was now a billionaire. And to become so successful after that terrible accident he had apparently gone through, too… if only Danny could've been so lucky.

He tried to clear his mind as he shifted again, getting as comfortable as he could manage before forcing himself to sleep.

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"All right, kiddos, we're here!"

"Finally," Jazz muttered.

Rubbing the sleep away from his tired eyes, Danny straightened up in his seat and looked out the window. "Woah."

It wouldn't have surprised him if he'd seen a large house or a mansion, but he was staring at what definitely appeared to be a castle. Brick walls, flags, and a pair of enormous double doors that

resembled a gate—it was all straight out of a medieval fantasy.

“Jack, are you sure this is it? This place looks like a historical landmark,” Maddie said.

“That’s because it is!” Jack replied. “I heard that this big ol’ piece of land was once owned by the Wisconsin dairy king. Not sure why Vladdie got ahold of it, though. But I do remember him being a big fan of cheese, so maybe that’s why.”

“Jeez, this guy really is loaded,” Danny said, still staring in awe at the castle.

“Kinda makes you wonder how he became so wealthy.” Jazz sighed. “Maybe we’d be just as well off if there was no influence of the supernatural in our household,” she huffed.

They all stepped out of the RV, and Danny followed his father’s lead as he guided them towards the front doors. There was someone waiting by one of them, and Danny wondered if they were some sort of valet that was employed by the castle’s owner. It wasn’t until they reached the bottom of the stoop that Danny was able to get a better view of the person, and he couldn’t help but stare in curiosity.

He couldn’t be taller than his dad. In fact, he looked just a bit shorter, yet his lean body made him appear like he could tower over anyone. He seemed to be as old as his parents as well, but his hair was a silvery white color, deceiving his presumed age. Oddly, it reminded Danny of his own when in his ghost form.

But the most striking thing about the man had to be his overall presentation. His fancy suit and neatly tied ponytail clearly stated how classy he was, and the way he had his hands hidden behind his back only added to that fact. He wore a soft smile just above his well-groomed beard, and his dark blue eyes complemented his suave appearance. It’s as if the man was cut right out of a modeling magazine, and Danny found himself admitting just how good-looking he really was.

“Vladdie, my man! It’s really you!” Jack exclaimed.

Danny blinked. He leaned into Jazz without looking away from the man. "*That's* Vlad Masters?"

Jazz shrugged and followed their parents as they walked up the steps. Danny went after her.

"Jack, what a pleasure to see you again," Vlad greeted him, and Danny immediately took notice of how smooth his voice was. He turned to Maddie, clasping his hands in front of himself. "Maddie, you've never looked lovelier, my dear. And I see that you have two just as lovely looking children beside you as well," he said, casting a glance at Danny and his sister.

"That's right, V-Man! This here is Danny and Jazz. And out of all my creations, I gotta say that these two are my proudest ones," Jack said enthusiastically, standing behind Danny and Jazz and putting one hand on each of their shoulders.

Danny made a face, cringing.

"Dad," Jazz groaned from obvious embarrassment, attempting to hide her face with her hand.

"Creations? Ah, so you're still an inventor, are you? I'm sure you've been able to come up with many great things with such a bright mind helping you out," Vlad said, smiling at Maddie.

"Oh. Why, thank you, Vlad," Maddie said, clearly charmed by the compliment.

Vlad hummed. "Well, how about we continue this conversation inside? Please, please, come in," he encouraged, opening the door wider and gesturing to enter.

Danny looked around as he stepped inside, once again filled with astonishment and wonder. The interior of the castle was just as impressive as the exterior with its wide-open space and extravagant décor everywhere he turned. Though, the wall of football paraphernalia stood out like a sore thumb. But Danny supposed even rich people could be fans of sports.

"What's with the green and gold? You're a billionaire, surely you

can afford an interior designer," Jazz said to Vlad, crossing her arms and peering around the room.

"Jazz, hello? Football helmets, jerseys, cheeseheads—he's a Packers fanatic," Danny explained, pointing his thumb towards Vlad.

Vlad ruffled Danny's hair, the action catching Danny by surprise. "Oh, 'fanatic' is such a negative word. But yes," he agreed politely.

"Hey, V-Man, mind showing me the way to the porcelain throne? I think that gas station burrito I had a while back would like to have a word with it," Jack said jokingly.

"Oh, of course." With a tepid smile, Vlad directed Jack to where the bathroom was. "Please, be my guest."

"Thanks, old chum. Carry on without me," Jack said with a wave of his hand to his family, taking to the hallway that Vlad had pointed out to him.

Vlad watched Jack as he left, and Danny thought he saw a resemblance of a scowl marring his features. But if there was one, it was gone by the time he turned to face him. Their eyes met, and Danny smiled awkwardly, his face heating up from being caught staring. Vlad smiled back.

"Would either of you care for a drink? Maybe some water?" he asked while casting his glance from Danny to Jazz.

"No thank you, Mr. Masters," Jazz answered.

"I'm good, too. Thanks," Danny said, a bit too quickly for his liking.

Vlad nodded, then walked over to Maddie, leaning slightly over her. "How about you, my dear? Perhaps your lips crave the edge of a glass filled with one of my finest wines?"

Danny looked on warily and tilted his head towards his sister. "Is he hitting on mom?"

"As long as he's got working toilets and mom says no, who cares," Jazz said dismissively, walking to the other side of the foyer.

That was strange, Danny thought. Did that mean Vlad was single? He couldn't fathom why. With his kind of charm and wealth, there had to be a list of women ready to steal his heart… or maybe even men. Danny blushed at the notion.

"Oh, um, I'm quite all right, thank you. Actually, I should probably go make sure Jack doesn't get lost." Maddie laughed nervously, pointing to the direction Jack went.

Vlad straightened up. "Ah, certainly."

Maddie smiled and nodded before walking off. "Play nice," she said to Danny lightheartedly as she passed by him.

Jazz was still on the other side of the room, observing the many decorative items Vlad had hanging on the wall there. Unsure what to do, Danny shifted on his feet, looking around again. His eyes landed on a large pair of doors nestled in between two staircases at the end of the foyer. He wondered where it led to when a heavy hand took purchase of his shoulder. Danny looked up to see Vlad smiling down at him.

"You seem like quite the curious type, son," Vlad said.

Danny shyly returned the smile and caught a whiff of something wooden and musky. He guessed it was Vlad's cologne. It smelled nice. "Oh, um, yeah—but, please, call me Danny. 'Son' is what my dad calls me."

"Oh, yes, yes, of course," Vlad said, gently squeezing Danny's shoulder in a reassuring manner. "So, why don't you tell me a little more about yourself, Danny?"

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Danny tossed and turned as he struggled to get even a wink of sleep in the most luxurious bed he'd ever laid on. The irony of it was palpable, but it wasn't because he couldn't get comfortable that he was restless. His mind was and had been totally occupied by a different subject, namely one that involved his dad's college friend.

As far as first impressions went, Danny concluded that Vlad Masters

had made an extraordinary one. The man wasn't snobby at all, with a composed yet laidback air about him. And his charm was just one of the many attractive characteristics that he had. Which, speaking of attractive, Danny reiterated to himself that Vlad knocked that one completely out of the park.

Danny turned to lay flat on his back, gazing up at the ceiling and sighing while he felt his stomach flutter. He'd never been one to find other guys attractive. Pretty girls like Paulina had always been on his radar. Then again, he'd never met anyone like Vlad before, and there was just something about him that Danny found appealing. So much so that it only took a day for him to apparently develop a crush on the man, despite how much older he was than himself. He felt silly for letting it happen when he knew nothing would come of it. It was just a stupid teenage crush, after all.

With a despondent frown, Danny moved to roll over when his ghost sense went off. "Oh, great. Just what I needed," he muttered.

He transformed into his ghost half and flew out of the bed, forming his spectral tail and then going intangible to pass through the wall.

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"No! Get away!" Danny yelled and pulled the fabric that was covering him off of his face. He sat upright, his eyes aimlessly flickering left and right. "Huh? Where am I? What happened?"

"I was going to ask you the same question, young man."

With a start, Danny turned his head to the sound of the familiar voice, at the same time realizing he was back in the guest room he was assigned to. He watched as Vlad emerged from the shadows, stepping into the bright moonlight pouring through the window as he walked up to the foot of the bed.

Danny aimed to calm his racing heart. His body ached. Memories of what had happened were coming back to him. His dad, the vultures… that terrifyingly powerful ghost.

"I found you completely unresponsive in the middle of the hallway

and had to carry you back here. Are you feeling unwell?" Vlad asked, sounding genuinely concerned.

Suddenly becoming aware of the awkwardness of being alone in a bedroom with another adult, Danny fidgeted under the bed sheets, grabbing a fistful of them. His face burned at the image in his head of Vlad holding him in his arms in a bridal carry, simultaneously grateful that the room was dark enough that he knew it would hide the red tinting his cheeks. Mentally shaking his head, he tried to focus on a lie to tell Vlad.

"Oh, um, I must've passed out after using the bathroom. The car trip really wore me out," he said along with an embarrassed chuckle, rubbing the back of his neck. "I'll be okay in the morning. Sorry for the scare."

"Oh, what's a little scare between friends, hmm? As long as you're all right. That's the important part."

Warmth bloomed in Danny's chest from being referred to as a friend and from having Vlad worry about his well-being. "Um, yeah."

"Good. I understand this isn't the appropriate hour to ask, but if by sunrise you're feeling up to it, maybe I can offer you some pancakes and a glass of fresh milk for breakfast?"

"Sure," Danny said with a happy nod.

Vlad smiled. "Well then, I'll let you get some rest now. Sleep tight, little badger." He turned his back to Danny and walked out of the room, gingerly closing the door so that it hardly made a sound.

Danny heard the faint taps of Vlad's footsteps get quieter as he walked away. He let out the breath he didn't notice he'd been holding. His heart was still pounding, and the fluttering in his stomach returned with a vengeance.

He had a feeling he wasn't going to get much sleep tonight either.

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Danny made his way into the empty dining room where he and his

family had dinner the previous evening. It was still early in the morning, so he figured that his relatives were still sleeping. The only reason he got up was because he got tired of trying to get some sleep of his own. He hoped Vlad didn't mind.

He quietly pulled out the chair he'd sat on the day before and got comfortable, twiddling his thumbs as he once again recalled the night prior. He remembered that Vlad had mentioned something to his dad about a ghost haunting the castle. That one he encountered must've been the same ghost Vlad was referring to. How Vlad was still alive when something like *that* roamed around in the halls was beyond Danny.

It really was the most powerful ghost he'd ever had the displeasure of meeting. His abilities far surpassed Danny's own *and* all the other ghosts he'd fought before. And it didn't help that Danny still hadn't managed to get a good grip of his powers. But if that ghost had that kind of strength, then that meant Danny potentially had the capability to learn the same moves. Unfortunately, he suspected that it was going to be a while before that was going to happen. A *very* long while.

"Quite the early bird, I see."

Danny whipped his head around to see Vlad making his way to him. "Oh, good morning, Mr. Masters." He hastily and clumsily started to get up from the chair to properly greet him, but Vlad gestured to remain seated.

"Please, we're friends, are we not? Call me Vlad," Vlad said with a warm smile that could melt anyone's heart.

Danny smiled back, his thoughts jumbling into an incoherent mess. "Uh, I didn't get to thank you last night for, um, that thing that happened. So, thank you," he said meekly, cringing from how uncoordinated he sounded.

"No need to thank me. You're my guest, after all. It's my job and my pleasure to look after you," Vlad replied eloquently.

With a sharp nod, Danny looked away as he felt warmth creeping

up his neck. This was way worse than any short conversation he'd manage to hold with Paulina. At least yesterday when he was talking to Vlad, Jazz was in the same room, but being alone with the man was a whole different ball game.

"Thanks," Danny repeated. "Oh, and I'm not all that hungry, by the way. I mean—just to let you know so that you're not in a hurry to get me something to eat. Not that it's your obligation to or anything, but…" he trailed off pathetically, playing with the corner of the placemat in front of him.

Vlad laughed quietly, his deep tone filling Danny's ears with the pleasant sound of his amusement. "Very well." He pulled the chair next to Danny and sat down, facing him. Danny was able to get a hint of his cologne as he moved. "How are you feeling? Well rested, I hope?"

Danny offered a weak smile. "Yeah, I'm feeling much better now," he lied, not wanting to concern Vlad with his own problems and sour the mood.

"I'm glad to hear. You had me a bit worried."

Holding off on apologizing, Danny scratched his warm cheek, failing to shoot down the butterflies in his stomach. The room was overwhelmed by a heavy silence as he tried to come up with something to say while he felt Vlad staring at him.

"So, I gathered that your parents are quite the inventors," Vlad finally spoke.

Danny nodded. "You could say that, yeah. They're mostly into ghost hunting stuff, though. Oh, well, duh. You probably knew that already."

"Indeed. We were quite the trio back in our college days, you know."

"Yeah?"

Vlad hummed in agreement. "When we met, we found out we all had the same unique interest in the paranormal. It didn't take long

for us to form a group and dedicate ourselves to studying the subject."

"And it was only the three of you?" Danny asked, beginning to feel at ease.

"It was. The subject matter was a bit taboo and not taken very seriously by others, as you can imagine."

"Oh, right," Danny said sympathetically.

"Still—even while our fellow peers would laugh in our faces—your mother, father, and I would remain persistent in perusing the answers to the mysterious questions that the supernatural world posed to us. Your father in particular took things quite seriously."

Holding fast to his silence for a moment, Danny carefully planned out his next choice of words. As curious as he was, he didn't want to bring up the accident that his dad had told his family about, thinking it would be rude and awkward to do so. "Are you an inventor like my dad, too? Like, even today?" he asked cautiously.

"When I'm not busy tallying up numbers, I do enjoy tinkering with my own creations. The passion still lingers even after all these years, and it reminds me of working with your mother. She was always a joy to be around," Vlad said, sounding nostalgic.

Danny's lips twitched as he fought to keep his smile at a minimum. It made him relax, the way Vlad spoke. He wouldn't mind just sitting there and listening to the man ramble on about his life.

"What about you, Daniel? I know you said that space is your primary interest, but has being around your parents perhaps piqued your curiosity in the supernatural?"

Danny lingered on the way his name was said. No one, not even his teachers, had called him that. He kind of liked it, especially when hearing it in Vlad's voice. "Sort of. It is kinda interesting. Ghosts and stuff, I mean."

"Isn't it?"

“Yeah. I never really thought much about it, though.”

“And why’s that?”

Danny thought for a moment. “I guess it’s because I’ve heard my parents talking about ghosts ever since I could remember. I think I’m kinda desensitized by now.”

“I see. I noticed your sister isn’t very keen on the whole idea, is she?”

“Jazz? Oh, yeah. She’s not on board with anything even relating to ghosts.”

“How unfortunate. It really is a rather interesting topic. The collected research of your father and mine’s has turned up so many amazing things.”

Danny watched as the corner of Vlad’s eyes crinkled when he narrowed his stare, gazing at the tabletop as if reminiscing about something. Or, at least, that’s what Danny thought he was doing.

“Like what?” Danny asked before he realized it.

Vlad looked back at him, his stare penetrating and his smile somehow coming across as insincere. It was the first time Danny had seen him like that. He fidgeted in his seat as he waited for an answer.

“Well, the most astonishing discovery is something very unique. Something I didn’t even think was achievable. Actually, to this day, I don’t believe your father knows.”

“Really?” Danny asked hesitantly.

Vlad nodded once, slowly. “As it turned out, I realized that it’s possible to merge human DNA with ghost DNA, essentially creating a human-ghost hybrid.”

Danny tensed. “Oh, um, wow. That’s pretty crazy,” he forced himself to say, trying to sound and look as surprised as he could while a wave of anxiousness washed over him.

“It is, isn’t it? Though, as of right now, it’s merely theoretical postulation. Regardless, this information is truly valuable. Can you imagine all the extraordinary things one could do with ghost DNA integrated in them? The concept itself is simply awe-inspiring,” Vlad said, smiling like someone who knew a dirty secret. “And I never would have been aware of this fact had it not been for the help of your brilliant father.”

Danny wasn’t sure what it was, but the way Vlad had mentioned his dad made him somewhat perturbed. Or maybe it was the discussion of half-ghosts, seeing as it was hitting far too close to home for his own comfort. He wondered if Vlad would be the type to experiment on him. Danny had noticed the man was very meticulous with his hand movements, dexterous like that of a surgeon.

His stomach turned at the thought.

“Something the matter, Daniel? You look like you’ve seen a ghost,” Vlad said teasingly, returning to his charismatic temperament.

Danny feigned a smile, mildly breaking away from his agitation. “I’m fine. It’s just… hearing about something like that is kind of, um… weird, I guess.”

“Ah, of course,” Vlad said and leaned back in his chair. A look of understanding replaced his previous expression. “It can get fairly macabre if one analyzes this particular concept at length. And especially at your age. My apologies.”

“It’s okay," Danny said, making himself relax a little.

“Hmm, then about about we talk more about the topic of the universe while we wait for your appetite to arrive?” Vlad asked after a pause.

Whatever remnants of fearfulness still clinging on to Danny soon lost their grasp after that. He nodded, this time with a genuine smile and a warm, soft feeling settling in his chest. “Sure.”

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“Sorry again about having to miss out on your shindig tonight,

Vladdie. I didn't think we'd have to be leaving after only one day."

"Oh, no, please, I completely understand. Unforeseen circumstances can happen to anyone at any given moment, and it's important that you tend to those kinds of situations."

"Always the considerate one, eh, V-Man?"

"Naturally."

Danny heard Vlad and his dad talking as he walked down the steps to the front entrance, the last of his belongings in hand.

"Hey, sweetie. Are you just about ready to head home?" Maddie asked, standing next to Jack.

"Yeah, I think so."

"Great. I'll go let Jazz know it's time to leave," she said and walked inside.

"Here, Son, let me take that off your hands so you can give Vlad a hug goodbye," Jack said, grabbing Danny's things and taking them to the RV.

Danny prayed that his dad wasn't being serious about giving Vlad a hug—not that he would mind, but it seemed inappropriate considering his newfound attraction to the man. And he'd probably embarrass himself and step all over Vlad's feet if he tried anyway.

"Although your stay was short, I do hope you enjoyed your visit here," Vlad said to Danny as he approached him.

Danny beamed, all but forgetting about the awful events that happened the previous night. "Oh, yeah, I sure did. And I'm glad I got to try those pancakes before leaving, too. You're an awesome cook," he said before he could stop himself.

Vlad gave him a half shrug and a smile. "It comes with the package."

Danny laughed.

“I must say, it’s been a pleasure meeting you, Daniel. You’re quite the character.”

“Oh, uh, thanks. But I’m just a plain old kid, really,” Danny said bashfully.

“On the contrary, I think you’re a very unique individual,” Vlad said, his intrigued tone suggesting he was being truthful. Or maybe Danny’s wishful thinking made him imagine that.

“Thanks,” Danny repeated, unsure what to say after being complimented. “You’re a pretty cool guy, too.”

“I appreciate the sentiment.”

They smiled at each other as footsteps approached them.

“All right, I think we’re all set,” Jack said, coming up from behind Danny. “It was great to see you again, old chum,” he said, wrapping an arm around Vlad’s shoulders.

“Yes, consider the feeling mutual, Jack,” Vlad said, sounding a little irritated. Danny guessed it was because of the way his dad was holding him.

“Okay, we’re all ready to go,” Maddie said as she stepped out of the front entrance, Jazz following closely behind.

Vlad maneuvered out of Jack’s hold. He took Maddie’s hand in his, putting his other one on top. “Maddie, you have no idea how wonderful it was to see you again,” he said, his tone much more affectionate than when he spoke to Jack.

Maddie smiled softly at him. “Oh, it was nice seeing you too, Vlad,” she said and gently pulled her hand away.

“It was nice meeting you, Mr. Masters. And it was nice staying here, too, even if it wasn’t for very long... unfortunately,” Jazz said, glaring at the RV seemingly out of spite.

“The pleasure was all mine, my dear,” Vlad said, welcoming her into a friendly embrace.

Danny felt himself getting a bit jealous of all the physical attention his mother and sister had gotten. Never had he wished to be a girl so badly than at that moment, as absurd as that sounded to him.

“Well, we better get going. It’s a long trip back home,” Jack said. “Hasta la vista, amigo!”

As his family walked to the RV, Danny took a moment to fight through his timidity, building up enough courage to extend his arm towards Vlad. “It was great getting to know you, Mr. Mas—I mean, Vlad.”

Vlad took Danny’s hand in a firm, cordial handshake. “And you as well, dear boy.”

Danny instantly missed the feeling of Vlad’s hand in his as they let go of each other. He offered the older man a somber smile. He wished he could do more for him and get rid of that awful ghost, but besides residing so far away, Danny couldn’t risk revealing his identity to Vlad, not when things were going so well between them. And he had a feeling that Vlad was the kind of person who could fend for themselves, especially with all the inventions he probably had. Maybe Danny could ask to show him some of them the next time around… or maybe not. “I hope we'll be able get together again sometime.”

“Ah, yes. Well, I wouldn’t fret about that if I were you. I have a feeling we’re going to be seeing each other again very soon,” Vlad said confidently.

“Awesome,” Danny replied, allowing himself to gaze into Vlad’s deep blue eyes one last time.

A double honk from the RV sounded through the sky. “Come along, Son! We gotta get on the road before the sun starts setting!” Jack called out.

Vlad sighed. “Your father always was the energetic type. You’d better get going.”

“Yeah. See you,” Danny said as he started towards the vehicle,

giving one final wave to Vlad as he left.

Vlad waved back at him.

“Take care, Danny.”